

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2010  
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.  
A-ONE Online Magazine  
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor  
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor  
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor  
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"  
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"  
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"  
Rob Mahlert -- Web site  
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,  
log on to our website at: [www.atarinews.org](http://www.atarinews.org)  
and click on "Subscriptions".  
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: [dpj@atarinews.org](mailto:dpj@atarinews.org)  
and your address will be added to the distribution list.  
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE  
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to  
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the  
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>  
Now available:  
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!  
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/>

=~::~~::~=

~ Apple iPad II in April? ~ People Are Talking! ~ Acer Unveils Tablets!  
~ X-mas Tree Virus Hoax! ~ Verizon Goes for Crown ~ MS Does A Flip-Flop!  
~ Jobs Gets Action Figure ~ Apple PC Sells - \$200k ~ Five Holiday Scams!

~ Checking Work E-mail?? ~ Next WikiLeaks Release ~ Wi-Fi Bad for Trees!

-\* Pirate Bay Convictions Upheld \*-  
-\* World Teamwork on Cyber Defense Plan \*-  
-\* Harsh Digital Copyright Bill Stopped, Now! \*-

=~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"  
"\*\*\*\*\*"

Whoever invented notches on a belt should receive a medal!! Why? If you have to ask, you didn't celebrate a turkey feast yesterday during the Thanksgiving holiday!! And I mean celebrate like I like to do, by eating a lot of turkey and the rest of the holiday's fixings!

I have to admit that when it comes to over-roasted turkey, there are only two people who can cook one the way I like it: my mother and me! My mother gave me her "recipe" for cooking a turkey many years ago; and since she's been gone for 10 years now, if I want turkey I have to cook it. And that's not a problem! None of this getting up before dawn and cooking a turkey for an entire morning! I bought a 18+ pound bird and it was fully-cooked in 3 1/2 hours. Moist and delicious! And yes, I realize that a bird that size is more than enough for two people (and shared a little with three dogs), but if I don't have plenty of leftovers to much on for 3-4 days, I will get depressed!

So yes, we had a great Thanksgiving dinner here. Very quiet, but that's fine with me. I worked the night before the holiday and had to work this morning; it's just too much to have to run around to family and eat and visit (or visit and eat!), and then get home and rest up. I'd rather relax and enjoy a quiet holiday at home, with no relatives on occasion!

Anyway, I hope that your holiday celebration was enjoyable also. If you're a little like me, you're about ready to loosen the belt another notch or two, and relax for the rest of the day/night!

Until next time...

=~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho, friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and it's been a pretty good one for me. If you're in the United States, you can probably figure out why. If you're not, well, there's bound to be a

similar holiday sometime throughout the year for you to related it to.

Yes, yesterday was Thanksgiving Day. The day that we are supposed to, well, give thanks. But what exactly does that mean? Thanks for what, to whom and how? I'm not going to get into the religious aspect of it. Who you pray to, when and with what words (or not) is entirely your affair. It's none of anyone else's business, and certainly not mine.

But anyway, as you probably know, it's a celebration of those hearty pilgrims over the elements in a land alien to them, a place full of strange plants and animals... and inhabitants.

Yes, this land was peopled before the pilgrims got here. The 'Indians' were here first and had some... issues with these new neighbors. They had strange ways, didn't seem to be in tune with their surroundings, and were so strange in their way of using resources... trees cut down by the acre for these strange houses of theirs, animals killed and a good portion of them wasted, crops planted at the wrong time. They were, to the Indian way of thinking, pretty much clueless about how to live by nature's rules.

And despite disagreements and misunderstandings, regardless of their strangeness... and they were strange... their skin, their hair, their clothing, the foods they ate and how they treated the natural world, the Indians did their best to live in harmony with the newcomers to the point of joining in the pilgrims' feast at the end of the growing season.

And because of what the pilgrims didn't know, we (and I'm saying 'we' because we really all share in the legacy of it) repaid them with things like small pox, which they had no immunity to. And because they were technologically more advanced and because we were 'able to', pushed them off their own land and made it more like 'home', regardless of what it offered in its own right. And through a lack of understanding (at least at first) borderline genocide through forcing the 'savages' into our mold, attempting to recast them in our own image.

Truth be told, the pilgrims might not have survived at all if it had not been for the Indians' help. Even though they didn't fully understand these newcomers, they did offer help and support.

Just an interesting tidbit here... do you have any idea of what the average lifespan of an early colonist was? Go ahead, take a guess.

43 years old. Yep, that's right, just 43. In order to make their meat last as long as possible, it was heavily salted. That kept most types of bacteria from growing on and in it. Of course, we now know what effect too much salt has on the human body. But back then, it was salt the meat or go hungry. Funny how the Indians did without it though, ain't it?

Well, back to Thanksgiving.

I'm sitting here, still feeling the effects of a tremendous Thanksgiving Day feast. It was truly delicious. Every bit of it. Well, ok, I didn't care for the sweet potatoes or turnip, but everything else from turkey and stuffing and mashed potatoes right down to the apple pie with coffee was wonderful.

Of course, it's hard for me to think ANY turkey isn't delicious. I love turkey. It's one of my two favorite main courses. The other is ham. But I'll talk more about that around Easter time.

I don't know what it is about turkey, but I can't get enough of it. White meat, dark meat, stuffing, the crispy skin, it's all delicious. And I can't get enough. Even though I went to dinner telling myself that I would "go easy" on the feast, I ended up, as always, overdoing it.

Yes, I admit it. I brazenly and without remorse stuffed myself like a pig. And then I went back and did it again. Hell, there was still turkey left! I HAD to! It was calling to me!

And then, of course, there was the apple pie with a dollop of whipped cream with coffee. Then came the double chocolate chocolate cake... then another slice of pie. And then a little bit more turkey off the platter. Hey, I HAD to.. it was just sitting there!

So yeah, I was full all day. Holding my stomach and thinking "what the heck did I do to myself?"

Of course, I do it every year on Thanksgiving Day, and the day after I ALWAYS swear I won't overdo it next year.

One thing I wasn't able to do as much of this year was to donate food items to local shelters and charities. I donated a bit, but not what I had wanted to. I mean, even though it's been a very tough year and funds are low, there's always a bit to give to the Salvation Army or to buy a couple of cans of this or boxes of that to donate to food shares or shelters or church groups. It doesn't take a lot, and at this time of year there will be plenty of places looking for whatever they can get.

Don't ever tell my parents that I'm telling you this, but when I was a kid, decades ago, there was a time when we needed a little bit of help to get us through the holidays. Our church came through in a big way. I can still remember the pile of food items, in big heavy cardboard boxes, that was left at our door one morning. We got through that year, and things got better and ever since then I've felt very strongly about donating what you can when you can.

That's why I hammer at you every year around this time about donating and helping out. Yeah, I've told you about Harry Chapin dope-smacking me and about being in a position (or two) where I've needed help, and I've pointed out that you can involve your kids and make them a part of it too. Remember: teaching them to share and do good might just come in very handy when you get older. [grin]

So think about it, huh? The holiday season is just beginning, and even though there's need all year long, it's now that it's felt most keenly. So put aside a couple of bucks for stuff to drop off at the soup kitchen or food share or church. And if you've got kids, give them a couple of bucks to get stuff to add to the donation. Take them with you and make them part of it. Let them see how it feels to give. Take them with you and let them help you carry it in, let them place their 'donations' on the table or counter or in the box or bin and watch their faces. Watch and see if you see on their faces what you feel within yourself.

And, of course, be careful when driving. Don't drink and drive. If you do drink, be responsible with it. Remember, the life you save may be MINE!

That's about all for this week, friends. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...



"Nope, absolutely not," replied Kipman.

Great news for hackers, but I'm not letting Microsoft off the semantic hook. The company's definition of "hack" sounds needlessly restrictive and doesn't jibe with modern usage. I prefer Wikipedia's definition, which "refers to the re-configuring or re-programming of a system to function in ways not facilitated by the owner, administrator, or designer." Alternatively, "To write or refine computer programs skillfully."

And yes, those definitions would include plugging Kinect into a device it wasn't intended to be plugged into and accessing it with ad hoc software, i.e. custom-built open source drivers.

Accessing the software algorithms that reside on the Xbox 360 itself would certainly be /another/ kind of hack, but not the only kind possible here.

The more interesting portion of the show involved Katherine Isbister, professor computer science and digital media at New York University's Polytech Institute in Brooklyn. Isbister spoke of research into the effect of playing Wii games on emotional states. If you play a Wii game that elicits a kind of silly, buoyant response (I'm looking at you, Dancing with the Stars) Isbister's hypothesis was that your emotional state would shift to match. And so far, the study's results suggest the hypothesis is probably true.

Sadly, Flato failed to bring anyone with a true critical perspective to the discussion, resulting in a lot of overblown rhetoric (like "ecosystem," "palette," "the journey," "new frontier," "inter-social," and most egregious of all, "creates an infinity") and a couple of unchallenged Microsoft reps overstating the device's motion-tracking capabilities. Kinect is clearly a better EyeToy, but notably limited in terms of what it can and can't track reliably. It's decent enough for casual play, but sloppy when gauging activities that demand kinetic finesse.

It overstates motion control's current and future place in our lives, too: At one point Isbister claims she'd prefer email to be "like doing Tai Chi in the morning." But would you really want to respond to meeting invites, work discussions, and personal correspondence by taking five or six times as long to do with your entire body what a mouse and keyboard can accomplish with fractional effort?

It's the Minority Report error and a classic example of a company mistaking novelty for functionality (that, or just using vague crystal ball hype to over-promote a product). We value functionality over form. The interface in Minority Report values form over functionality because... well, because it looks cool. But gesticulating (or speaking) in front of a TV screen to process email (private? work-sensitive?) is just a way to make an otherwise straightforward process less friendly and more frustrating.

Just because a product seems newfangled and interface-upending doesn't mean it is or even ought to be. Remember Microsoft Bob (see above)? If it feels right, it probably is right, but if it feels like a solution in search of a problem or a novelty gestural system that adds work instead of subtracting, it's probably that, too.

=~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

EU, US and NATO To Work Together on Cyber Defense

A range of new plans to tackle cyber-crime has been approved by the European Union, the U.S and NATO over the past three days.

The European Commission announced on Monday its proposals to develop three systems to raise the level of security for citizens and businesses in cyberspace.

An E.U. cybercrime centre to be established by 2013 will coordinate cooperation between member states, E.U. institutions and international partners, while an European information sharing and alert system, also planned for 2013, will facilitate communication between rapid-response teams and law-enforcement authorities. The Commission also wants to create a network of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) by 2012, with a CERT in every E.U. country.

However, Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström was keen to play down concerns that these systems would lead to the creation of yet another citizens' information database, saying that no such database would be set up and that the aim of the new bodies is to manage the flow of information to prevent cyber-attacks, not to store it.

Meanwhile, following a meeting between U.S. President Barack Obama, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and European Council President Herman Van Rompuy at the weekend, the E.U. and U.S. leaders announced the setting up of a working group on cybersecurity, which will report back in a year's time. This group will focus on the commercial side and potential threats to the regular consumer, said U.S. envoy to the E.U. institutions William Kennard.

E.U. leaders on Sunday also made reference to data protection issues, saying that a speedy compromise on an overarching E.U.-U.S. data protection agreement may facilitate the conclusion of other data transfer deals - for instance on passenger name records.

Elsewhere, NATO adopted its Strategic Concept charter at a summit in Lisbon, Portugal. The document includes plans to develop new capabilities to combat cyber attacks on military networks, but stops short of the 'active cyberdefense' plans that would have included the pre-emptive cyber-strikes favored by the Pentagon. Following attacks in 2008 on its classified military network the Pentagon established a new cyber-command, making 'active cyberdefense' one of its policy pillars.

The new Strategic Concept replaces a 10-year-old strategy paper and seeks to update plans for the Internet age.

Awareness and planning are the cornerstones of the new NATO strategy. Terrorist groups and organized criminals are increasingly using cyber

attacks on government administrations, and potentially also transportation and other critical infrastructure.

NATO members are keen to avoid a repeat of an incident affecting Estonia in 2007, when cyber-strikes paralyzed bank and government websites there. Increasingly large-scale attacks have threatened security in recent years. Two years ago Lithuania was subject to large-scale cyber-attack; the botnet 'Conficker' has affected millions of computers worldwide, including in France, the U.K. and Germany; and the 'Stuxnet' worm, possibly the first targeted cyber weapon, infected industrial control systems.

### Harsh Digital Copyright Bill Stopped - for Now

A single senator on Friday stalled a bill that would give the federal government the ability to shut down websites allegedly participating in copyright infringement.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden announced his opposition to the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act at a committee hearing on Friday. The bill was unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee one day earlier.

The bill has drawn a lot of opposition. Many critics say it will trample free-speech rights (PDF) and could give the government the ability to censor controversial websites such as WikiLeaks.

"Deploying this statute to combat online copyright infringement seems almost like using a bunker-busting cluster bomb, when what you need is precision-guided missile," Wyden said in an article on Raw Story.

The co-sponsor of the bill, Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, said, "Few things are more important to the future of the American economy and job creation than protecting our intellectual property. That is why the legislation is supported by both labor and industry, and Democrats and Republicans are standing together."

Apparently Leahy wasn't planning on Wyden voicing his opposition which will put the bill on "hold" until the next Congress convenes.

Hopefully the new Congress will give this some more thought.

I get that copyright infringement is a problem, but this bill sounds like giving the government the ability to take out certain streets because shady business deals happen on them.

Maybe it's time to target the problem instead of taking a broad swipe. After all, wouldn't it be easier to take down the entire Internet instead of just regulating a few shady sites?

Just another case of a bunch of "old guys" trying to regulate the series of tubes.

U.S. allies around the world have been briefed by American diplomats about an expected release of classified U.S. files by the WikiLeaks website that is likely to cause international embarrassment and could damage some nations' relations with the United States.

The release of hundreds of thousands of State Department cables is expected this weekend, although WikiLeaks has not been specific about the timing. The cables are thought to include private, candid assessments of foreign leaders and governments and could erode trust in the U.S. as a diplomatic partner.

In Britain, Prime Minister David Cameron's spokesman, Steve Field, said Friday that the government had been told of "the likely content of these leaks" by U.S. Ambassador Louis Susman. Field declined to say what Britain had been warned to expect.

"I don't want to speculate about precisely what is going to be leaked before it is leaked," Field said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said U.S. diplomats were continuing the process of warning governments around the world about what might be in the documents. Many fear the cables will embarrass the United States and its allies, and reveal sensitive details of how the U.S. conducts relations with other countries.

"We are all bracing for what may be coming and condemn WikiLeaks for the release of classified material," he said. "It will place lives and interests at risk. It is irresponsible."

The Obama administration on Friday warned that the WikiLeaks release would endanger "lives and interests."

Italy's foreign minister, Franco Frattini, said he spoke Friday with the U.S. State Department, which told him that there would be documents regarding Italy in the leak, "but the content can't be anticipated."

"We're talking about thousands and thousands of classified documents that the U.S. will not comment on, as is their custom," Frattini said.

The governments of Canada and Norway also said they had been briefed by U.S. officials. Israel's Foreign Ministry declined to comment on a report that it, too, had been informed.

In Iraq, U.S. Ambassador James F. Jeffrey told reporters that the leaks represent a serious obstacle to international diplomacy.

"We are worried about additional documents coming out," he said. "WikiLeaks are an absolutely awful impediment to my business, which is to be able to have discussions in confidence with people. I do not understand the motivation for releasing these documents. They will not help, they will simply hurt our ability to do our work here."

In Norway, U.S. officials released a statement from the ambassador to the newspaper Dagbladet with the understanding that it would not be published until after the WikiLeaks material came out, but the newspaper published the material ahead of time.

It quoted U.S. Ambassador to Norway Barry White saying that, while he could not vouch for the authenticity of the documents, he expected them to contain U.S. officials' candid assessments of political leaders and

political movements in other countries. He said diplomats had to be able to have private, honest discussions to do their jobs.

The Obama administration said earlier this week that it had alerted Congress and begun notifying foreign governments that the whistle-blowing website is preparing to release a huge cache of diplomatic cables whose publication could give a behind-the-scenes look at American diplomacy around the world.

"These revelations are harmful to the United States and our interests," U.S. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said. "They are going to create tension in relationships between our diplomats and our friends around the world."

Diplomatic cables are internal documents that would include a range of secret communications between U.S. diplomatic outposts and State Department headquarters in Washington.

WikiLeaks has said the release will be seven times the size of its October leak of 400,000 Iraq war documents, already the biggest leak in U.S. intelligence history.

The U.S. says it has known for some time that WikiLeaks held the diplomatic cables. No one has been charged with passing them to the website, but suspicion focuses on U.S. Army Pfc. Bradley Manning, an intelligence analyst arrested in Iraq in June and charged over an earlier leak.

Frattini, the Italian foreign minister, said Friday that he had been "told that the person responsible for this leak has been arrested." The Italian Foreign Ministry later said Frattini was talking about Manning.

WikiLeaks, which also has released secret U.S. documents about the war in Afghanistan, was founded by Julian Assange.

The Australian former computer hacker is currently wanted by Sweden for questioning in a drawn-out rape probe. Assange, 39, is suspected of rape, sexual molestation and unlawful coercion. He has denied the allegations, which stem from his encounters with two women during a visit to Sweden.

#### Convictions Upheld in Pirate Bay File-Sharing Case

A Swedish appeals court on Friday upheld the copyright convictions of three men behind The Pirate Bay, a popular file-sharing site that remains in operation despite attempts by authorities to shut it down.

The Svea Appeals Court agreed with a lower court ruling that found Fredrik Neij, Peter Sunde and Carl Lundstrom guilty of helping users of the site to break Sweden's copyright law.

However, the appeals court reduced their prison sentences from one year each to between four and 10 months and raised the amount they have to pay in damages to the entertainment industry to 46 million kronor (\$6.5 million).

The lower court had set damages at 32 million kronor (\$4.5 million).

A fourth man convicted by the lower court, Gottfrid Svartholm Warg, didn't appear in the appeals court hearings, citing illness.

The Pirate Bay has been a thorn in the side of the entertainment industry for years by helping millions of people illegally download music, movies and computer games.

The defendants have denied any wrongdoing, saying the site doesn't actually host any copyright-protected material itself.

Instead, it provides a forum for its users to download content through so-called torrent files. The technology allows users to transfer parts of a large file from several different users, increasing download speeds.

Neij's defense lawyer, Jonas Nilsson, said he wasn't surprised but disappointed by the appeals court ruling and said they would probably appeal to the Supreme Court.

It was not clear whether Sunde and Lundstrom would appeal. Their lawyers did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Swedish authorities have been unable to shut down The Pirate Bay despite the guilty verdicts. But Monique Wadsted, a lawyer representing entertainment companies including Warner Bros., Columbia Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, said she believes the site's days are numbered.

"My assessment is that in two years this type of piracy activity will be completely dead," she said.

Others were not so sure.

"People won't stop file-sharing because of this," said Andre Rickardsson, an expert on file-sharing and information technology security at Sweden's Bitsec Consulting.

"All that is going to happen is that this type of operations will just be moved to other countries," he said. "There are no frontiers for the Internet."

#### Acer Unveils Range of Tablets

Acer Inc, the world's No. 2 PC manufacturer, unveiled a range of tablet computers to help it compete with Apple Inc's iPad, wading into the fast-growing market.

The tablet computer market is becoming crowded as more companies produce the new devices, which fall between traditional PCs and smartphones.

Chief Executive Gianfranco Lanci announced at a news conference in New York on Tuesday that the tablets would have 5-, 7-, and 10-inch screens, running on Google's Android software. A second 10-inch tablet will run on Microsoft's Windows.

The company said the WiFi-only models of the tablets would come out in April 2011, while the third-generation (3G)-capable models would arrive

about a month later. The 5-inch tablet doubles as a smartphone.

Separately Tuesday, Acer's rival Dell Inc announced a new tablet that runs on Microsoft's Windows software.

Acer, based in Taiwan, said it was in talks with U.S. phone carriers for 3G connectivity for its tablets.

No prices had been set for the devices, the company added.

"It's a gold rush right now," said NPD analyst Ross Rubin. "Everyone wants to get a tablet product out there."

Apple's iPad, a touchscreen tablet that began selling in April, still has an overwhelming lead in the fledgling market. It controlled 95 percent of the tablet market in the July-to-September quarter, according to research firm Strategy Analytics.

"PC vendors and hardware vendors are looking at this market and saying 'how will I compete with Apple?'" Gartner analyst Carolina Milanesi said.

Tablet sales are expected to grow to 54 million units in 2011 and to more than 100 million units in 2012, according to a forecast by research firm Gartner.

Acer also unveiled a screen laptop with two 14-inch LCD touch screens called the Iconia, along with a media store and software called Clear.fi that lets customers stream content on different Acer devices.

Dell's new 10-inch touchscreen Inspiron Duo looks and runs like a portable tablet but can also be popped into a laptop shell and used like a traditional notebook, similar to one of the new Acer tablets. The Duo starts at \$550. Dell has already released the 5-inch Streak tablet.

#### Apple iPad II Coming in April?

Wasn't the iPad just released? And a new one is on the horizon? Will the new one wipe out all the tablets running Android? Was this upgrade planned all along to blow off the competition or to ruin sales?

The unconfirmed rumors of a new iPad coming in April, if they boil up to an extreme level, could ruin the Christmas sales of the current version of the iPad. People will think, "Hey, I was going to buy one, but why bother when a newer, better iPad is coming out in April? Apple always brings out newer and better versions, right? I'll just wait."

This is the major problem with rapid product turn-arounds. If they get leaked in advance, they mess with the sales of the current product. Of course, they also submarine the competition. "I'm not buying one of those either. I'm just not buying anything until I see what happens in April."

In this sort of economy, people like me - an average member of the general public when it comes to buying expensive consumer electronics - look for any excuse not buy something. Knowing there is going to be a new iPad gets me to stall.

Compare this to the marketing strategy of game console manufacturers' strategy I detest, but admire. Both Sony and Microsoft should have developed, designed, and shipped new game consoles by now. By this I mean, Sony should have launched a totally new, perhaps backward-compatible PlayStation 4. There are some vague rumors that something new is coming someday, but I'm not even sure anything other than a minor upgrade is on the drawing boards because of the low noise level of the rumor mill.

The same holds for the Xbox 360-2 or whatever it will be called. Where is that console? To me, it's long overdue. If these folks were in the computer game, the mobile phone game, or the tablet game, we'd all be playing the PlayStation 10 and the Xbox 1000. But no. And that actually turns out to be a good thing. There is no confusion during the Christmas buying season.

The game designers are not distracted by new features. And it makes users feel good. They don't have to worry about buying something that will be obsolete in a year. It's a great example of a steady, reliable, and perfect environment for making money.

You can see the effect of the uncertainty when the console manufacturers decide to switch models. Remember when the Xbox was changing to the Xbox 360 and Sony was trying to leapfrog with the PS3? It had to have been a nightmare for the marketing people. Users were freaked out by compatibility issues and didn't know whether they should buy the 360 or wait for the PS3, which everyone said would be somehow better.

During this fracas, the Nintendo Wii snuck into the scene and all of a sudden stole the thunder of these two technologically superior devices. Very few pundits saw that coming. During this era, all the commentary was that the Wii had a dumb name and did not have HD video and thus could not succeed. Also, the controller was too weird for the public to ever accept.

The game console companies had to struggle to re-stabilize the market and are in no hurry to go through that again until absolutely necessary. Also, both these companies watched Sega, in the olden days, bring out a series of dead-end consoles and essentially give up altogether. Just when it had its winner, the Sega Dreamcast, it just couldn't take it anymore.

The PC industry has survived quick upgrades to its software and hardware, because few of the changes are as drastic or revolutionary as console upgrades. But they still confuse the public a bit when pre-announced. Pre-announcing has always been considered the worst thing you can do in the computer business unless there are safety valves. Microsoft could pre-announce versions of Windows, for example, using the free upgrade safety valve. "Buy the older version now, and you can upgrade to the newer version for free."

Apple won't do that. It would be too costly. So it'll be interesting to see how sales go for the iPad between now and April. I'll be watching.

Steve Jobs Action Figure Looks Real

If there's one more thing a true Apple fan should have on his or her desk besides an iMac and an iPhone dock, then it's this wonderfully crafted

Steve Jobs action figure.

Jobs' trademark black turtleneck, blue jeans, and (removable) rimless glasses are all there, of course, but the tiny details like the faithfully replicated New Balance 991 sneakers Steve wears make this one a real winner.

Action figure Steve even has a tiny iPhone in his left hand (he's holding it wrong, we think), but perhaps the most amusing parts of this cute toy are the speech bubble cards that you can stick to Steve's head and write your favorite Stevejobsian catch phrase on it.

The price is \$79.90, but we won't comment on whether that's too much for Apple's boss, immortalized in plastic. Just let your heart decide.

### Verizon Grabs for Internet Speed Crown in New Plan

Verizon Communications Inc. is zooming past cable-company competitors by tripling the top download speed of its FiOS Internet service to 150 megabits per second, or 50 times faster than a typical DSL line.

The new speed tier announced Monday costs about \$200 per month for consumers, depending the length of the contract and whether the subscriber buys Verizon's phone service as well.

Cable TV rival Cablevision Systems Corp. has been offering speeds of 101 megabits per second for \$100 per month since last year, and Comcast Corp. rolled out a 105-megabit offer this year. The new tier allows Verizon to claim that it has the fastest service of any major Internet provider.

Verizon gets bragging rights, but there aren't many ways for a household to take advantage of speed increase from, say, 20 megabits per second, to 150. The lower speed still allows for three or four high-definition video streams at the same time.

The upload speed on the 150-megabit service is 35 megabits per second, a speed Verizon has already been offering on a lower tier. High upload speeds can be useful for making online backups and sending massive video files.

New York-based Verizon hopes that the availability of higher speeds will stimulate the development of applications that can take advantage of them, spokesman Bill Kula said.

Before the end of the year, Verizon plans to offer the service to small businesses, at higher rates.

FiOS is available to 12.5 million homes, mainly in the Northeast, Texas and California. However, not all of them will be able to sign up for the new high-speed service. Where Verizon introduced FiOS first, the older terminals installed in customer homes don't support the 150 megabit speed, and the company has to send out installers to replace the terminals. That's free for customers signing up for the 150-megabit service for one year.

A public-sector alternative is even faster. In September, the city-owned electrical utility in Chattanooga, Tenn., started offering Internet

service at 1 gigabit per second, or six times higher than Verizon's top tier, at a cost of \$350 a month.

### Apple Computer Sells for \$213,600 at Auction

This month, I wrote about an Apple-1 computer that was set to be auctioned for \$150,000 by the auctioneer Christie's. The bidding is now closed, and the computer that debuted in 1976, for \$666.66, built by Steven P. Jobs and Steve Wozniak, Apple's co-founders, sold for \$213,600.

Not a bad return on investment, especially considering most technologies decrease in value as they age.

The lot, which included the Apple-1 computer, an Apple cassette interface card, a typed letter signed by Steven Jobs and other archaic goodies, went on sale on Tuesday.

Who was the high bidder? According to Affaritaliani.it, an online Italian newspaper, it was Marco Boglione, an Italian businessman who likes to collect tech-related paraphernalia.

Tony Avelar/Bloomberg News Steven P. Jobs stands in front of a photograph of himself and Steve Wozniak, his Apple co-founder.

Owning an Apple-1 is definitely the cherry on top of any historical computing collection. There were less than 200 of the machines built and sold before Apple moved on to create the Apple-II. The Apple-1 is also considered to be one of the first genre of computers that led to the genesis of the home-computing revolution.

The auction of the Apple-1 was part of a series of high-tech auctions that took place on Tuesday through Christie's. An Enigma cipher machine, which was used to encrypt secret messages during World War I, was also auctioned off, fetching \$107,000.

### Christmas Tree Virus Hoax Spreads on Facebook

There's a new message spreading quickly on Facebook users' walls, warning people about an application called "Christmas Tree." The message is fake to our knowledge. No Internet security firm has issued a threat warning about such an application.

The message comes in several different forms, claiming the Christmas Tree Facebook app will either crash your computer or steal your personal data.

A typical message looks like this: "WARNING!!!!!!.....DONOT USE THE Christmas Tree application on Facebook. Please be advised it will crash your computer. Geek squad says it's one of the WORST trojan-viruses there is and it is spreading quickly. Re-post and let your friends know ( from a friend )"

Besides the fact that Geek Squad, a company that does IT service and computer repairs, is not a reliable source for info on new malware, Sophos claims it's not aware of any malicious Facebook app using the Christmas

Tree name.

Of course, with the message spreading as quickly as it is, it wouldn't surprise us if someone actually created a malicious app bearing that or a similar name. That's the problem with fake warnings: They create confusion and after a while it gets hard to distinguish the fake threats from the real ones.

Please, don't repost the Christmas Tree virus warning, or any similar threat, unless you're sure it comes from a credible source.

## 5 Holiday Tech Scams to Avoid

The holiday shopping season is a great time to get tech products at discounted prices, but it also creates a golden opportunity for the Web's scam artists. The FBI, McAfee, the Better Business Bureau and F-Secure are all warning about cybercriminals who will try to take you for a ride this holiday season. Here are their most pertinent warnings and tips for staying safe:

Bogus free iPad offers started popping up immediately after Apple's tablet went on sale, and they've since been banned from Facebook. Still, you might see similar offers around the Web, McAfee says, prompting you to buy other products as a condition of getting the free iPad. By now, you should realize it's too good to be true.

That free \$1,000 gift card offer you saw on Facebook? Bogus, of course. McAfee says that cybercrooks lure people into giving away their personal information or taking quizzes in exchange for these cards, which never arrive. The information is then sold to marketers or used for identity theft.

The FBI also says to use caution when purchasing gift cards through auction sites or classified ads. These can be fraudulent, and you won't get your money back. Buy directly from retailers instead.

Here's a particularly tricky scheme pointed out by the FBI: On auction and classified sites, fraudsters use their own order forms to get payment details from holiday gift buyers. Then, they charge the victim's credit card and use a stolen credit card to buy the actual item, which is sent directly to the victim. In other words, you'll still get the product, but you might be liable for receiving stolen goods. To avoid this scam, be sure to use legitimate payment services like Paypal instead of providing money directly to the seller.

The feds also warn of a related scam for free or reduced-price shipping offered on auction and classified sites. The fraudsters provide fake shipping labels to the victim, and the product ends up being intercepted in transit, never delivered to its destination.

For cybercriminals, spamming Google with bogus holiday gift pages is a yearly tradition. These pages could be loaded with malware or payment forms intended to steal your identity. F-Secure has created a list of what it thinks will be the highly targeted search terms this year, including Kinect for Xbox, Call of Duty: Black Ops, Amazon Kindle and Apple iPad. Visit retailers' websites directly when possible, use Internet security software if you must and always check for "https" in the URL bar before ordering

online to ensure that the page is secure.

Public Wi-Fi networks will get a workout this holiday season as people travel, McAfee notes. This is especially true with Google offering free Wi-Fi on domestic flights from three major airlines. Check out our security tips from Google's free Wi-Fi offer at airports last year, most of which are still relevant in the skies. Number one tip: Avoid shopping and paying bills over a public network.

### Majority of Americans Check E-mail Over Holidays: A Survival Guide

There you are, relaxing with your family after a great Thanksgiving feast, when your Blackberry buzzes. You glance at the screen and notice it's a new email - from your boss. Really, you think, on Thanksgiving day?!

Well, you're not alone - a new poll by Xobni and Harris Interactive shows that a whopping 79 percent of working Americans receive work-related emails over holidays - and 59 percent check them.

In an online survey conducted by market research firm Harris Interactive (on behalf of Xobni), 2,179 adults aged 18 and older were polled on their holiday email usage. According to the poll, 41 percent of those who receive work emails over the holidays were - big surprise - not terribly thrilled with it. Twelve percent of respondents said they "dreaded" seeing work emails, and 10 percent said they felt pity for those (bosses, I'm looking at you) who actually send work emails out over the holidays.

But not everyone enjoys their holidays more than their jobs - 19 percent of respondents who have ever received work-related emails over the holidays said they were "thankful" for the distraction. Five percent even said they use work email to their advantage - as a way of avoiding awkward family moments, or getting out of boring holiday commitments.

Lastly, 42 percent of the email-checkers said they are just thinking of the future - after all, nobody wants to be overwhelmed with emails on the first day back.

\*Here's some better advice on how to handle work emails over the holiday season:\*

1. Tell your boss/co-workers/clients you'll be out of the country. Somewhere third-world. Where there's no internet. Tell them not to bother emailing you, because you'll be backpacking in Patagonia and you won't be able to check it.
2. Set up filters. Yeah, I realize that some of you check your email so as not to be overwhelmed with a chaotic inbox when you get back. So set up filters for your boss, your co-workers, your clients, etc., and have your email automatically sorted into them. Now when you get back, (at least part of) your work will be done.
3. Set up a vacation responder. Preferably one that says, "I'm backpacking in Patagonia and have no internet access for the next two weeks."
4. If you absolutely must check work emails while on vacation, only respond to the ones that need responding to. I cannot stress this enough. You are

on vacation, and so most people will treat your absence as, well, an absence - unless you give them an excuse not to. For example, by responding to their emails even though you're supposedly "gone."

What do you guys think - how many of you are going to be checking emails this Thursday?

### Study Finds Wi-Fi Makes Trees Sick

Radiation from Wi-Fi networks is harmful to trees, causing significant variations in growth, as well as bleeding and fissures in the bark, according to a recent study in the Netherlands.

All deciduous trees in the Western world are affected, according to the study by a group of institutions, including the TU Delft University and Wageningen University. The city of Alphen aan den Rijn ordered the study five years ago after officials found unexplained abnormalities on trees that couldn't be ascribed to a virus or bacterial infection.

Additional testing found the disease to occur throughout the Western world. In the Netherlands, about 70 percent of all trees in urban areas show the same symptoms, compared with only 10 percent five years ago. Trees in densely forested areas are hardly affected.

Besides the electromagnetic fields created by mobile-phone networks and wireless LANs, ultrafine particles emitted by cars and trucks may also be to blame. These particles are so small they are able to enter the organisms.

The study exposed 20 ash trees to various radiation sources for a period of three months. Trees placed closest to the Wi-Fi radio demonstrated a "lead-like shine" on their leaves that was caused by the dying of the upper and lower epidermis of the leaves. This would eventually result in the death of parts of the leaves. The study also found that Wi-Fi radiation could inhibit the growth of corn cobs.

The researchers urged that further studies were needed to confirm the current results and determine long-term effects of wireless radiation on trees.

=~==~==

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: [dpj@atarinews.org](mailto:dpj@atarinews.org)

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without

the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.